

The Power of High Voltage Communications

The roar of applause jarred Paul back into the stark reality of the high school gym. For the past twenty-five minutes, Paul had talked to 250 young people about the dangers of drinking and driving, his audience riveted to every word. As Paul shared his story of drinking, driving, and maiming a bicyclist three years ago, the words seemed to tumble effortlessly out of his mouth, surprising even Paul at their eloquence.

As Kathy reviewed her qualifications, she felt a wave of empathy rush over her. Her interviewer had just been promoted to director of product development and was eager to prove himself. In the pit of her stomach, she felt his anxiety about failing and wanted to assure him that she would help him succeed. His success was Kathy's success and she knew that together they would not fail. As she spoke, she saw the tension in his eyes relax. She knew he trusted her. A week later, Kathy was hired as his assistant.

Tom took a deep breath and gathered his thoughts. In a half-hour he would make a presentation to the executive committee that would determine his future with the company. Tom knew his stuff and he knew that what he had to say was important. He began his presentation at 9 a.m. sharp, and by 9:25 it was over. Tom knew his recommendations would be accepted even before the committee voted on them.

Research has proven that communication skills are a top determinant for corporate and social success. Webster's defines communications as a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behavior. But in today's techno-frenetic world, we are overwhelmed by information. Now, communication must entail more than the simple exchange of information. It must cut through the clutter; it must garner attention.

While many feel that attention is the new currency in today's world, attention is still not enough. If our goal is to motivate people to listen, decide, and act, attention must be complemented by connection.

Connection is a basic human need and our world is hungry for it. In business, connection often accounts for why one salesperson's firm is selected over another, why one employee receives a promotion and another does not, and why some managers attract and retain top employees and others do not.

During connection an emotional charge is transmitted between sender and receiver. Quantum physics teaches us that focused attention generates energy. When we communicate, attention creates thoughts, thoughts stimulate emotions, and emotions result in electrical charges. Higher emotions such as love, empathy, and compassion transmit higher electrical charges, and higher electrical charges create what I call high voltage communications (HVC). It is here that we are our most effective as communicators.

We become high voltage communicators by harnessing the power of 4Ps: Personhood, Purpose, Persona, and Presence. Through their collective power, we communicate in a manner that is competent, confident, credible, passionate, and likeable. We garner attention and foster connection by building bridges, instead of creating ladders.

High Voltage Communicators:

Communicate with the primary intention to connect with others, to motivate rather than manipulate.

Create instant rapport by becoming other focused and self-forgetful about their performance.

Understand that all communications, whether with one or one hundred, is one-to-one communication. As a result, their communication style is consistent in the break room or the board room.

Are good listeners with their eyes and ears. They are hyper-aware of others' perceptions and ideas, and the feelings behind them, and they are attuned to what others are saying nonverbally as well as verbally.

Concentrate intently on the conversation; they are present to the person and the moment.

Are not afraid to let others see them; they allow others glimpses behind their masks.

Create a safe space, or container, in which people can speak truthfully without fear of reprisal or judgment.

Respond from deep within, sometimes to the point of being surprised at their responses.

Feel charged and energetic; they do not feel drained in any way.

Good communicators use three primary tools to aid in communication: purpose, persona, and presence. Good communicators become high voltage communicators, however, when a fourth P is added to the mix. With personhood, speakers are self-aware, confident, and credible; without it, they lack authenticity and the ability to earn trust.

Purpose transforms careers into callings, ignites passion, and empowers the way in which we speak. Persona describes the masks we wear, or images we assume, in order to facilitate communication. In business, it is the way we brand ourselves professionally, or create our professional image.

Finally, presence is the way in which we carry ourselves, and it determines in large part our ability to convey likeability, credibility, and authority, the three hallmarks of powerful communicators.

Picture personhood, purpose, persona, and presence as the four points of a cross contained in a circle. Personhood is at the bottom of the cross and serves as the foundation of the model; purpose is at the top, where with personhood it creates a stabilizing vertical axis. This vertical line represents work we must do internally. Looking at the horizontal axis, we find persona at the far left and presence on the far right.

Personhood, purpose, persona, and presence are at play every time we communicate, although most of us are unaware of it. But when we become aware of the four Ps, we can harness their power to become the powerful communicators we were born to be.

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About the Author

Randy Siegel works with organizations to take employees and give them the leadership and communications skills they need to be successful as they rise through the organization. Subscribe to his complimentary monthly e-Newsletter "Stand in Your Power!" at <http://www.powerhousecommunications.com>